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The long life of Cyril – the philosopher (827-869) written perhaps by his brother Methodius says: ‘When they saw these wonders, the Romans became still more attached to his sanctuary... And they painted an icon of him over his tomb and began to keep a light burning there day and night.¹ Today this icon is already half-obliterated. In the ancient Roman Basilica of *San Clemente* only fragments remain of the oldest murals which glorify the deeds of the Titan. But the thread which started there has reached us through the centuries in the form of a tradition which is continually revived. For 1,100 years the Bulgarian people recreated this icon with love and gratitude in their churches and monasteries and in the hearts and minds of their sons. To the Bulgarian people Cyril and Methodius are prophets who struggled with the retrograde forces of their time in order to be in conformity with the following centuries. That is why the Bulgarian people bestowed on them the golden haloes which not only gave them a place in church art, but also symbolized feelings that have never waned. These haloes are the light in the eyes of Bulgarian children as they learn the Bulgarian alphabet. They are the warmth in the hearts of their fathers, who increase their spiritual wealth by teaching them the wisdom of their grandfathers who protect their lasting virtues from fleeting passions. That is why the presence of Cyril and Methodius has always been felt so strongly in the struggles of the Bulgarian people and in the holies of old and present-day Bulgarian culture. That is why the reverence accorded them and the recurrence of their images in the art of countless generations are a historic necessity.

The Slav enlighteners Cyril and Methodius travelled all over the Christian world, from Salonica to Cherson and Veligrad, from

Constantinople to Rome, not with the idea of reshaping the map of medieval Europe, however, but to bring the lawful progression of history into line with it. While mastering the knowledge of their time, they thought of the future because they realized that the social, political, religious and cultural processes which would enlighten and enhance the prestige of Slavdom could be directed towards justice. Their mighty voices sent new and old delusions tumbling down. Those who persisted in the contention that, since the inscription of Christ's cross had been written in Greek, Latin and Hebrew, these were the only admissible cultural languages, were forced to agree, although not without reluctance, that 'the sun shines the same for all', and that the Bulgarians could use their own language in their churches. A delusion was thus done away with, an act which neither sword nor glaive would be able to revoke. Slav literature began to emerge which was to become the code for the moral perfection and advancement of millions of people. This literature at once found in Knyaz Boris' and Tsar Simeon's states the mighty support that enabled it to forge ahead confidently and irresistibly in many countries down the centuries.

This was an act as significant as Khan Asparouh's spear, Khan Kroum's laws, and Knyaz Boris' cross, because it united all three organically in the symbol of the written letter, thus providing a lasting foundation for the spiritual cohesion, national pride and all-round advance of the Bulgarian people.

This grandiose deed gave rise to a great wave of energy that spilled over manuscripts and epistles, sculptures and ceramic icons, and inundated court scriptoria and monastery hearths everywhere, as irresistible and invigorating a force as the powerful instinct to live and create. We feel this energy in the daring thought of the Bogomils and the enthralling speech of Patriarch Evtimii, in the angry pathos of the Hilendar monk Paissii and the boundless self-assurance of the Samokov iconographer Zahari Zograph. The authors of this act were therefore precursors of the Renaissance who had grasped the key issues in European spiritual progress long before people like Martin Luther, Thomas Münzer and François Villon did. To the Bulgarian people they were also the precursors of a host of revolutionary turning points in history, because their

speech, which has survived to this day, has proved capable of overcoming all prejudice and breaking the chains of slavery. After many centuries of foreign domination, when they began their dramatic struggle to rejoin the free peoples of the world in the march forwards in the middle of last century, the Bulgarians continued to see them not as ethereal shadows from the past, but as real live leaders. The two Salonica brothers inspired and strengthened the people in their endeavour to achieve what Lyuben Karavelov called 'a genuine historical liberation'. During the National Revival period they were an example which, in Hristo Botev's words, 'inspires the people with the idea of complete spiritual and political liberation'. Therefore their name again became an aureole over the legendary deeds of Bouzloudja and Vola. That is also why today, as young Bulgarians confidently stride on towards socialism, perpetuating a sacred tradition, they continue to celebrate these men's anniversary, carrying facsimiles of their letters. That is why Chernorizets Khrabur's words of ten centuries ago still echo around the festive squares of Bulgaria: "Saint Constantine the Philosopher, called Cyril, created the alphabet and translated the Books together with his brother Methodius."

The lives of the two brothers represent a condensed history of their epoch. The example was set by Cyril himself, who described the finding of the relics of Saint Clement I as a 'great deed', 'progress', the 'rising from the earth of yet another glorious sun'. Kliment Ohridski used the same words when he confided to his parchment his immeasurable love for his teacher. He saw him embracing many nations and countries with his ideas: "The blessed Father Cyril is the Apostle and teacher of all the earth's lands".² Kliment also described him as 'a most luminous face' that bathed him in 'the light of his sweet reason', and he could not tear his glance away from the 'golden radiance of his eyes' which had saved his mind from 'blind unreason'.³ The anonymous writers of the other long or short biographies of the two brothers spoke about their lives in the same ways. They were of the opinion that the ideas, public controversies, trials and virtues of the two enlighteners were not personal matters, but rather that they formed an inseparable

part of the great religious, political and cultural processes of the medieval world.

As a young boy in the famous Magnaura School in Constantinople Cyril mastered the sciences and the arts with enviable speed, and even defended his own opinions and ideas against the iconoclasts, such as Patriarch John VII Morcharzanos (Grammaticos) 837-842. This is not merely a simple biographical detail, but serves as evidence that he was predestined for a life of great deeds. And when the Saracens demanded that a man be sent who could explain to them the advantages of one religion over another, Cyril emerged as the most suitable person. He was chosen again later, together with his brother Methodius, when similar learned interpretations were demanded by the Khazars (859-861). At that time the question of the spreading of Christian influence in the Slav world had already become the paramount theme in the disputes between Byzantium and the Western Church. Purely religious differences were intertwined with political ends, and the struggle between the two religious and political centres for supremacy had complex and dramatic consequences. When from Veligrad the Moravian Prince Rostislav (846-874) sent a request for teachers to be sent who were capable of explaining the Christian faith in the Slavonic language, the obvious choices were once again Cyril and Methodius. Emperor Michael III (842-867) was well aware of the fact that his father and his grandfather, 'as well as many others', had searched in vain for an existing Slav alphabet, and had not discovered one, but miracles were still possible. Cyril's creation of the Slav alphabet became such a miracle.

The creation of an alphabet for the Slavs and the translation of the main liturgical books into the Slavonic language (863-867) were acts to make the heavens rejoice. When Cyril the Philosopher went to Venice, however, 'bishops, priests and friars fell upon him as crows on a falcon', berating him with the three-language dogma: 'How did you dare create books for the Slavs and teach them in their own language? We know of only three languages – Hebrew, Greek, and Latin – in which one is allowed to praise God.'⁴ The answer, however, was powerful enough not only to silence and humble the opposition, but also to pave the way for the triumph of a

humanistic cause for centuries to come. That is why when he reached Rome, he was met by none other than Pope Adrian himself and a huge candle-light procession, since Cyril was bringing 'the relics of Saint Clement, the first Roman Pope after Saint Peter and a Christian martyr'. The Pope accepted from him 'the Slav Books', and blessed them and laid them in Saint Mary's Church. Services in the Slavonic language were for the first time held in the famous churches of the Eternal City, an event which 'stopped the mouth of the wolves and the tree-language heretics' and caused Kliment Ohridski to exclaim: 'I adore your pure hands, through which a cloud of sweet reason has descended upon my people, soaking our sinful and barren hearts with a dew sent down from God.'⁵

The manuscripts preserving these eulogies were distributed far and wide, copied and recopied; they represented an immutable national heritage. But they were supplemented and extended by the new 'Lives' written during the Bulgarian National Revival period of the 18th and 19th centuries, but written not in the name of the glorious past, but in the name of the revolutionary years which were to come. In the articles written by the political emigrants, at celebrations in the modest monastery schools, in the first books printed in the Bulgarian language there is ample evidence of the new miracles that were being performed by the great brothers. They again became 'the saviours of our nationality' (Lyuben Karavelov).

A further supplement to the old short and long biographies of the two enlighteners are the pictorial representations, which abound in the iconography of the Bulgarian National Revival.

They retell the old and known facts, but in a new key, often naively, but always in a touching and detailed manner. This is evidence of the growing horizons and thirst for knowledge of the masses of the people during that period. Through these representations the two enlighteners entered every Revival home, they came into close contact with millions of people, becoming their companions and advisers in times of great trials and of hope for better things to come.

In the long biography of Cyril we are told that after his death 'many miracles began to happen' in the Basilica where he was buried. Be that as it may, one thing is certain, that the *San Clemente*

Basilica itself belongs to the world of miracles. Its history is rich in exceptionally wide and dense projections, and if the Pantheon is the temple to all the gods, the Basilica can rightly be said to be a 'Pantheon' dedicated to all the centuries. Some 300 m from it the huge Colosseum has survived thanks to its grandeur, but the Basilica swallows it up, gives a meaning to it and turns it into a symbol of the evolution of man's spirit because of its universal significance. The Basilica's modest roof is a refuge for ancient legends born in Salonica, Antioch or Milan, for relics of saints brought from Cherson and Bari. It holds the aesthetic expressions of personalities of several important epochs in European culture, and reflects the controversies that took place in Alexandria, Pliska and Venice. Today these past epochs, legends and reflections can be understood at first hand and can be touched, because they are there, in their silent forms, images and colours, through which, however, they continue to conquer us by means of some kind of powerful radiation.⁶

In reality, as along the great thoroughfares of history, the individual epochs are united under its roof first and foremost through their mutual negation. Those mysterious parts (including a housing complex and a Mithras temple dating from the 2nd century), which are situated some 20 m under the present building, rose up on a site ravaged by the flames of Nero's Rome Fire (64 A.D.). They constituted the architectural nuclei not only of an urban way of life, but also of a religion. Mithras' temple – the only one of its type in Rome – provides much information on how the various cults from the East spread and on the development of the belief in mystical numbers, and the iconography on the sacred sculpture (of which there are also similar traces in Bulgarian lands). Probably because of its relation to similar general prejudices and norms, this complex was left below ground level. The first *San Clemente* Basilica, mention of which is found in documents as early as the 4th century, was built over its ruins. It was in this Basilica, which became one of the centres of the City's religious life (in the 6th century the newly created Benedictine Congregation took it over)⁷, that Cyril, Apostle to the Slavs, was buried – 'to the right of the altar' as the 'Lives' have it, but in reality in the left nave.

Several murals with important subjects and aesthetic details have survived in the central nave and the narthex of this building. They show Saint Clement returning a small child to its mother after it had been swallowed up by the waves, scenes from the life of Saint Alexis, the Crucifixion of Christ, Christ's Ascension, the Descent into Hell, the Virgin and the Child (which some experts, such as Father Dominic Darcy, say is a variant on portraits of Theodora, the wife of Emperor Justinian). Most of these murals raise important questions regarding the evolution of individual iconographic figures and schemes and on the stages in the development of the Roman School of art during that period, which was already moving away from Byzantine models.

During Cardinal Anastasius' time, about the year 1100, the 4th century Basilica was razed to the ground: this was done because the building was in danger of collapsing. But this act of abandonment is in itself symbolic. By that time Christian art had already made considerable headway and the expressive figures with tragic masks, which first appeared in the Christian catacombs and primitive chapels in the Middle East had already passed through many stages of thematic elaboration and enrichment. After the Edict of Milan (313 A.D.) which admitted them to the majestic churches of the centuries to come and the huge palaces of emperors and great feudal lords, the authors of murals became propagators of the official line on aesthetics. In the East, during the Byzantine dynasty of the Comneni, their activity as iconographers was regulated by strict canons of artistic style. They encouraged the trend towards monumentality, vivid colour effects and alluring harmony and rhythm of stylized forms, which were no less important to their evolution than was their faithfulness to the transcendental principle. It was with similar ideas in mind that the builders of the 12th century Basilica began their task. At first the new building of the Basilica displayed a rather modest amount of decoration, but the magnificent mosaic in the apse and the triumphal arch were sufficient to give an impression of splendour and richness, and to prove convincingly that a new age had dawned in the development of Christian art.

The world represented in this mosaic is manifestly two-dimen-

sional. Sophisticated spatial transitions have been rejected, and everything is compressed into a flat spreading-out of two stylized branches that bend symmetrically to form 25 helixes (arranged clearly in horizontal and vertical belts). The golden background has absorbed into itself air, space and light, thus forming an abstract plane environment. While renouncing its primary freshness, many-sidedness and objectivity for the sake of symbolism, stylization and the one-plane rhythm, this world has, however, regained these very qualities in its own way, however paradoxical this may seem, and creates an impression associated with visual truth. The narrative begins with the Crucifixion and comes back to it again as the symbol of suffering and salvation. In between, however, it passes through scenes and details of a genre and narrative, and a poetic and mythological character, through which an unusually wide range of nuances is obtained. The birds that have found refuge between the huge boughs and leaves, and the shepherds who seem at ease in their intimate microcosm, the flowerets which peep out boldly from between the large forms, the four rivers (Pison, Gihon, Tigris and Euphrates), the storks and the domestic animals imbue the whole with an atmosphere of cheerfulness. All these images are small in size, but they possess a sufficient emotional charge so as to give rise to a sense of super-abundance, solemnity and light. That is why their stylization emerges in practice as a transcription of genuine genre and landscape motives, while the Cross of the Crucifixion is encircled by a stylized tree of life. And although the images on the triumphal arch represent concrete texts and situations, the general wave of cheerfulness has affected even them. In the groups of St. Paul, St. Laurence and the prophet Isaiah (on the left), and St. Peter, St. Clement and the prophet Jeremiah (on the right), and in the symbols of the Evangelists seen above them (on both sides of Christ Evergetes) one sees the confident hand of an artist who knows how to characterize things accurately and with style and how to instil in them infectious liveliness and freshness.⁸

The chapel at the end of the left nave was painted during the last few years (1428-1431) of Cardinal de Castiglione's long term of office (1411-1431) by two remarkable representatives of Italian Renaissance art, Masolino da Panicale (1383-1447) and Masaccio

(1401-1428). At that time the medieval pictorial system was already in a state of rapid decline and the two artists expressed the humanistic and aesthetic requirements of their time with great plasticity. They continued to work in the sphere of religious art only, depicting scenes on well-known themes: on the left wall there are compositions devoted to Saint Catherine of Alexandria, who was tortured and beheaded by Emperor Maxentius for intervening to save persecuted Christians, on the right wall a scene from the life of St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, at the far end the Crucifixion, and over the arch groups of Evangelists, with their respective symbols. The range of the two artists, however, is new not only in respect of the details, but also in essence, because in all the compositions on the three walls, and particularly in the huge Crucifixion scene in which Masaccio's keen perception and analytical mind are felt, the figures move in a real world and embody feelings with lasting earthly projections. They pass through well-known streets, all coloured with ochre and Pompeian red, or they peep from small balconies supported by graceful columns, they move in interiors with panelled ceilings already introduced by Giotto, or they walk through landscapes without inverse perspective and escarped balconies. Every figure expresses an important part of the whole, that is why each silhouette is clearcut and monumental, as is also the entire space, because the old ornaments, flowerets, and other details, which used to be there as an end in themselves, had gone out of fashion. Of the old interpretation of the Crucifixion theme only the general scheme of the composition remains. At the foot of the Cross the artist's contemporaries: knights, tradesmen, suffering women, etc., occupy the space without feeling compelled to change their dress for the occasion. Through them the event becomes part of contemporary history. Its components are well-known reflections and sufferings, and this produces a feeling of satisfaction that real life has been brought under control in all its historical, social, psychological and spatial aspects. Because of the wealth of its effects, the neatness of the planes and the brightness of the details, this art ranks among the highest achievements of early Italian quattrocento. It established in a moving manner those artistic achievements

which had a great impact on so many generations of European artists, including the creators of the Basilica's later paintings.

Three centuries passed, and in the 18th century a new influence made itself felt in the 12th century Basilica, where considerable changes were made to the central nave. Some of the windows along its walls were closed up and a little later, during Pope Clement XI's time (1700-1721), eight huge baroque compositions were inserted in the resulting new spaces: on the left 'St. Clement Presenting the Veil to Flavia Domitia' (by Pietro di Pietri), 'St. Clement in the Crimea' (by Sebastiano Conca), 'St. Clement's Death', and 'The Transportation of St. Clement's Relics' (by Giovanni Odazzi); on the right 'The Death of St. Sylvester' (by Tomaso Chiari), and three scenes with St. Ignatius from Antioch (by Piastrili, Giacomo Triggia, and Pierleone Cezzi). About the same time Pietro Rassinì painted two separate full-length figures of Cyril and Methodius over the main door. In all these murals the principles of the theatricalized multiplane narrative is dominant, with the inevitable host of complicated poses, rich accessories and effective detail. Sebastiano Conca's approach is seen to be similar in his painting in the Chapel of St. Dominic (in which Cyril's relics lay for a long time); it features scenes from the life of this saint. The new sculpted and painted roof of the central nave (by Carlo Stefano Fontana and Giuseppe Chiari)⁹ is probably of the same period, i.e. the beginning of the 18th century.

In this way the 4th century Basilica, which has convincing resemblances with other early Christian monuments and repeats their specific features already in a medieval variant, is entirely immersed in the brilliance of the baroque patterns and elements. This reconstruction which was performed by architect Carlo Stefano Fontana and the frescoes on the ceiling of the central nave painted by Giuseppe Chiari early in the 18th century have little in common with the amazing uniformity of style, simplicity and harmonic beauty of the small artio of the 12th century, which is considered one of the best of its kind in Rome. They have no logical connection with the older murals on the right hand side of the central nave — the compositions situated there (illustrating the life of St. Ignatius of Antioch) and the full-length pictures of Christ and the apostles over

the archbishop's chair in the central apse are dominated by entirely different tastes and concepts of style. The murals in the Chapel of St. Dominic (1715) enrich the traditions of the baroque system of painting and again 'conceal' the roads leading not only to Antiquity and the early Christian period but even to the works of the following centuries, like the tomb of Cardinal Venerio (1479), 'Virgin with a Child' by Giacobbe Zucchi etc.

A new page in the history of the *San Clemente* Basilica was the creation of the Cyril and Methodius Chapel in 1882-1886. In it the visitor can see three compositions by Nobili, 'Cyril and Methodius before Pope Adrian II', 'Cyril's Burial', and 'Cyril and Methodius Presented to Christ by Pope Leo XIII'. A splendid Madonna, painted by Soferrato (1605-1685), is preserved in the same chapel.

Despite all these changes and reconstructions the individual periods do not clash, but, notwithstanding their fundamental differences, they rather enrich each other mutually and use ornaments, motives and pictorial technique which bring them together. Antiquity remained buried under the early medieval building, but its artistic concepts live on either through the reliefs of the sarcophagus regularly used for Christian burials (nowadays in the right-hand section of the 4th-century Basilica), or through the ornaments and certain details included in the later mural compositions. In the group at the foot of 'The Crucifixion' the 12th-century mosaicists introduced many mythological figures and gods which for a long time had paraded through the art of the ancient world (e.g. the 'Demon', or the 'Sea God' upon the dolphin). The representations of the phoenix as a symbol of immortality and as a characteristic element in the general picture of paradise, as well as the 'tree of life' well-established in the art of the East, are likewise of ancient origin. When the 12th-century Basilica was being built many columns and a large number of blocks with relief carvings on them, including the podium for the choir *la schola cantorum* from the original building (4th century), were preserved and used again. The podium which is now in the central nave was donated in the 6th century to the Basilica by Pope John II (533-535). Antique concepts and ideas are also reflected in Masaccio's energetic *quattrocento* murals. Yet

when they are viewed not as 'anachronism' or as secondary details, but as an essential part of the artistic conception, these images, techniques and ideas prove to be a necessary link between the conflicting historical epochs, and it is this link which gives the whole Basilica, with its wealth of components, such a specific and complex character.

The images of Cyril and Methodius serve as a similar link between epochs. After the death of Cyril the Philosopher in the 4th century Basilica were painted scenes relating to his life-work. Afterwards, when the old Basilica had to be razed to the ground and rebuilt, Cyril's remains were transferred to the Chapel of St. Dominic. He continued to influence the work of the painters of the following epochs, however, and compositions with his figure in them were still considered necessary (cf. Pietro Rassin's murals). About the end of the 18th century the sarcophagus containing his remains vanished from the Basilica,¹⁰ but the spirit of Cyril's great deeds continued to haunt it. The new 1882-1886 chapel and Nobili's compositions proved this most convincingly. In 1963, after an announcement that a small part of the relic had been found, and after Pope Paul VI in person had celebrated a liturgy in honour of its return, a memorial plaque was put up in the Basilica telling of this event. The latest 'contribution' of similar character is the monumental mosaic panel, the work of the Bulgarian artists Stoyan Koyumdjiev and Yordan Spirov, which represents the two brothers in full length as translators of the holy books into the Old Bulgarian language.¹¹ It was created and built in the wall opposite Cyril's tomb in 1975. In this way although not a central theme for various generations of artists working in the Basilica, in essence the images of Cyril and Methodius are one of the major and most lasting links between them.

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The oldest such figures were very likely painted soon after Cyril's death, immediately next to his tomb, in the western part of the left nave. But only fragments of these paintings have survived, so that any study of their iconographic characteristics must remain

incomplete. At the bottom several rectangular fields with dark circles (five in each) and freely painted ornaments and birds can be seen, and above them damaged, full length silhouettes of saints (on the right there is a face, which is particularly noticeable because of its tense expression). A small upper part of the mural, which has been more or less preserved, shows the leg of a man hanging head downwards. The detail gives reason to assume that the central place on this wall was probably taken up by a composition depicting 'The Crucifixion of Peter and Apostle'. Cyril, however, was included at the left end on the second belt, not as a bust or statuary figure, but in a composition of a historical and narrative type, which supports the view that the scenes around it must have been a logical continuation of the narrative.¹³ The copy of the composition made after the first archaeological intervention (in the 14th century), strengthens this assumption, because it completed many of the obliterated details and showed that the subject of the mural was an episode from Cyril's life, probably his meeting with the Byzantine Emperor Michael.

In this iconographic cycle some experts are inclined to see, not without reason, one of the works of Methodius himself. The legends which would seem to support this theory are borne out by certain stylistic features of the above-mentioned figures. Together with the composition 'The Virgin and Child', in the right nave, and the scene of 'Christ's Ascension', they offer the most striking proof of the persistence of that aesthetic line, which started from the catacombs of Rome and Antioch and left a lasting imprint on many monuments in the Orthodox East, including medieval Bulgarian painting.

The composition 'The Private Judgement' in the porch of the Basilica is probably also connected with Cyril's tomb. Besides Christ Evergetes, surrounded by the archangels Michael and Gabriel, and by St. Andrew and St. Clement (in pairs, with recurrent silhouettes) it also includes two more figures, in monk's habit, which, most experts agree, are the brothers Cyril and Methodius.¹⁴ The mural is now in a rather bad state, but the style is still discernible. It is directly related to the figures in the left nave and is reminiscent of the archaizing and ethnical trends in the art traditions of the Balkan countries. Its author does not make use of a

great variety of contours and colours, thus accentuating the simplicity of the figures and giving them a down-to-earth character, without, however, making them too naturalistic, circumstantial and extrinsic. He subordinates his composition to the traditional Byzantine two-dimensional approach and closes his forms by 'graphic' means, without striving for any complex spatial development of the individual shapes. The basic colour fields and the thick lines are not devoid of emotional intensity, yet the entire mural gives the impression that the higher accents are damped down. This is the same trend which is characteristic of many of the monuments of the Balkan Slavs.

Cyril and Methodius' solemn entry into Rome, bearing the relic of St. Clement (868 A.D), is recreated in one of the most interesting compositions to be seen in the narthex. St. Clement – the first Pope was deported by order of Emperor Trajan (99-117 A. D.) to Cherson of Tauris, a town in what today is the Crimea. According to the legend he continued to spread the ideas of Christianity and was therefore put to death: he was thrown into the sea with an anchor round his neck. His relic, still very well preserved, was discovered, some eight centuries later, and Cyril composed a very poetic eulogy, in which he refers to the relic as 'pearl-like', 'blessed' and 'fragrant'.

The transportation of the relic by the two brothers is described in greater detail in their biographies, again in the same tone. According to the long life of Cyril, they were met 'by Pope Adrian in person and all the citizens, carrying candles.'

НАЖЕ СЛЫШАВЪ АПОСТОЛІКЪ АНДРІАНЪ... И ТАКО ПРИЕТЬ НХЪ ЯКО И АНГЕЛІИ БЖІЕ
И ОУЧЕНІЕ СЮ ВЪЗДАЮЩЕВЪ, И ПОСТАВИ БЛАЖЕНАГО МЕФУДІА ПРЕСВІТЕРУ И ОУЧЕНИКЪ ИХЪ!

Kliment Ohridski describes the event in the same vein:¹⁵ (Hearing this, Pope Adrian received them as God's angels, and approved their teaching, and ordained the blessed Methodius a presbyter of their pupils).

In the composition of the narthex well-known aspects and persons are emphasized and the narrative preserves its usual solemn tone. Cyril and Methodius are represented in the left half, standing

on both sides of Pope Adrian II (867-872), while in the centre of the mural a portable couch can be seen bearing the relic of St. Clement (he actually looks very much alive). At the left end is shown the liturgy celebrating the great event. The postures and the rhythm of the group carrying the relic, which forms the link between the relatively static groups around it, heighten the feeling of tension, while the gonfalons and the censers, raised high above their heads, create a general mood of festivity and excitement. The way in which the faces around the relic are characterized makes it reasonable to assume that they represent the above-mentioned 'pupils' of Cyril and Methodius.

The development of the pictorial narrative results in the emergence of two visual centres, the one devoted to the meeting of the relic, and the other to the liturgy. But they do not break up the mural as a whole but rather enrich it. The author of the mural uses equally skilfully symmetry and strict frontality, and phraseological elements, while keeping them in a mobile rhythm. He also knows how to give a different spatial orientation to the individual masses that he handles. He possesses a fine and precise line, and outlines the individual shapes almost with the loving hand of a calligrapher: the lively postures, the elegant silhouettes, the vivid details and the light architectural features endow his narrative with a refinement and a fascination which leave a lasting impression. That is why his art looks alien compared to the mosaics and murals of the monuments of the Constantinople cycle; his style is original and could be compared to that of the illuminated medieval miniatures. It is not by chance that the ways in which the 'action' between both centres is illustrated is reminiscent of medieval miniature style and in particular of the illuminations in the Madrid copy of John Skylitzes' Chronicle (12th century). His style reflects his self-assurance and maturity, which is why some art experts, Pietro Toesca for example, rightly see him as an artist who does not have his origins in the Byzantine school, but was moulded in Rome and afterwards created here one of the masterpieces of the Roman School.¹⁶

One of the compositions on the left wall of the central nave of the new Basilica is devoted to the same theme, although it displays

an already different plastic structure. Its author, Giovanni Odazzi (1663-1731), applies a baroque technique which uses many planes in order to express the extreme tension in which all earthly and celestial powers are held. Small angels fly above the sarcophagus with the relic. The space is dappled through the play of restless lights and shadows. The life of the people is broken by spontaneous bursts of joy. The Pope, the brothers Cyril and Methodius and the other main figures are no more the only centres. Figures move around them gesticulating, or their head bowed in prayer, with the self-confidence of central heroes. The complicated arabesques of the individual groups, the half-naked bodies, the dramatic postures and the richly coloured costumes in this particular instance contribute to the general aesthetic picture, because the emphasis was already shifting towards romantic exaltation and decorative effects. Psychological and even purely pictorial problem tended to be played down in the interest of the general magnificent and dramatic spectacle. A similar tendency is felt in the murals painted by Rassini, high up on both sides of the main door (the images of Cyril and Methodius in full length).

Nobili's compositions are influenced by the academic doctrines of the end of the century. They are well-balanced and carefully rounded off, with the accent falling on the centre, special attention being paid, however, to scientifically accurate accessories. Nevertheless, the group in which Pope Leo XIII is presenting Cyril and Methodius to Christ, with its accurate shaping and circumstantial line is perhaps not fully in keeping with the plane character of the golden background (which is an imitation of medieval mosaics). The solemnity and tension of the gestures tend to be somewhat declaratory in character. In the two other compositions, however, the historical background is effectively tightened up and the main characters move against it confidently. Their silhouettes are beautiful, their gestures well-motivated and they present a visually harmonious interrelationship. On the whole the colours of the painter's palette are somewhat muted, but his attention is apparently not directed at purely pictorial problems but rather he seeks to achieve a rhythmic characterization of the silhouettes. The artist makes skilful use of architectural detail and manages to achieve a

feeling of historical authenticity and tension without overdoing things. In this respect his self-control creates a favourable impression, because the mania for bloodthirsty themes, nocturnal flashes of light and naturalistic 'accents' had turned more than one of the historical paintings of his contemporaries into theatrical trash or imitations of very little artistic value.

The iconographic details of some of these representations, and the clothing of the two brothers in particular, have caused divergences of opinion and given rise to understandable reservations. The historical sources, the works of Kliment Ohridski in particular, all inform us that Methodius was given the title of bishop by the Pope, while Cyril before his death 'wore only a black cassock'. Since in the above-mentioned representations some of the figures wear bishop's robes, some scholars are of the opinion that Cyril is not among them. When considering these disparities, however, one should remember that precise visual information was not always uppermost in the mind of the medieval artist. He would readily tolerate deviations since he did not believe that the depicted person lost his authenticity (similar examples are to be found in the miniatures of the 14th-century copy of the *Manasses Chronicle*¹⁷, and the 12-century copy of the *Skylitzes Chronicle*)¹⁸. In the 18th century Rassini depicted Cyril in rich bishop's robes and did not hesitate to explain in an inscription below that this was in fact Cyril. This might have resulted from lack of sufficient information. The artist who painted the mural in the narthex of the old Basilica wrote the name Nicholas around the image of the Pope, although it was clear that it could not have been anyone else but Adrian II. Similar interpretations could be made because the halo of one of the brothers is missing in the same mural, the more so since it could be a replica of a mural first created between 869-885 A.D., i.e. after Cyril's death, when he had already been canonized (by the Western Church), whereas Methodius had not. One of the compositions, again probably relating to the cycle painted near Cyril's tomb, shows a bishop baptizing a half-naked heathen. Opinions about this bishop are divided, too: the character of the vestments makes some experts wary of accepting that it could be Cyril. If everything is considered, however, in the context of the style and the characteristic

techniques of medieval art, the scene could quite justifiably relate to the activity of the two Salonica brothers. On the one hand it is not further from historical truth than the works of the artists of the 18th and 19th centuries; on the other, it is backed up sufficiently by the communication on 'The Bregalnitsa Christening' for us to leave some room for reservation. Therefore among the considerations and interpretations made by a great number of scholars on this subject, including many Bulgarians (such as A. Vasiliev, A. Teodorov-Balan, V. Dimov, V. Filipov, V. Pandurski, B. Angelov, D. Usta-Genchov, etc.) the prevailing opinion is that the above-mentioned representations and scenes are in fact devoted to Cyril.¹⁹

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The first portrayal of Cyril near his grave in the *San Clemente* Basilica was but the first of a number of similar works in the art of many other nations and epochs. They constitute a very interesting series of pictorial, graphic and sculptural compositions and 'portraits' spread over a long historical period, from the 9th century to the present day, and over a wide geographical region, from the Charles Bridge in Prague, where Karel Dvorak's sculptural group stands, to Veligrad, where Steinhäuser's marble relief is kept, and from Yan Matejko's Cracow studio to the depositories of the Dohiar Monastery on Mount Athos. All these works are related not only to the development of religious life in these countries, but to their secular and cultural history as well. They are the expression of complex moral, historical and patriotic concepts, which is why they reflect not only the idea of that unity of the Slav world, but also a host of other concrete situations and trends. These things are also found in old Bulgarian art.

It can be assumed that soon after the introduction of Christianity into Bulgaria (865 A.D.) the feverish activity to satisfy the country's needs for places of worship and holy objects had begun to be tinged with a certain expediency and patriotism, at the same time submitting to the requirements of the general administrative building of the Bulgarian Church.²⁰ The 'glorious seven episcopal churches', with which Prince Boris engirdled his country

were built, decorated and fitted out with requisites not only with the aid of foreign specialists. The team of Cyril and Methodius' disciples, who under the direction of Naoum translated the sacred books in the Ticha Monastery, probably had a direct influence on the development of local artistic skills. It is logical to assume that small ceramic icons were produced in Preslav prior to 893 A.D. when Tsar Simeon came to the throne. The ceramic ovens, used during the building of the Round Church, date from those 28 years, in which Simeon is said to have 'built his capital'. In Patleina, where the men of letters toiled to do away with the last remnants of the 'three-languages dogma', older ceramics workshops probably existed. The large St. Todor ceramic icon could never have been made without a considerable prior accumulation of experience. Similar suppositions may also be made about other ceramic ovens (including those in the monastery buildings near the place).²¹ That is why the time between the arrival of the foreign preachers (and the first conflicts with them) and the 893 A.D. Synod, i.e. when Slav-Bulgarian books were introduced into religious services (known as 'the application of the books'), was a period of preparation. With the appearance of the Cyril-and-Methodius letters on ceramic tiles with religious pictures the icon became a local work of art. It embodied the feelings of pride of the artists, who were no longer mere copiers and apprentices but the executors of important state orders. The inscriptions on the small enamelled plates baked in Preslav's kilns, including the inscriptions around the figures of popular saints, proclaimed the birth of the Bulgarian icon. It is logical to assume that soon after Cyril and Methodius' death their images, too, were included in the repertory of this icon making (and in the country's religious art in general). The great popularity enjoyed by the eulogies which their disciple Kliment Ohridski wrote in their honour gives sufficient grounds for making such assumptions.

But when one speaks of the reflections of their ideas and images in Bulgarian religious art, several other facts (at first glance incidental, perhaps) also need to be taken into account. The first relates to Cyril's activity in the fight against the Constantinople iconoclasts.

The second fact concerns the assumption that Methodius was

a painter. John Skylitzes, the 11th century Byzantine chronicler, affirms that Knyaz Boris 'was given the name of Michael by the prelate sent to him, who also baptised him.'²² For additional information and colouring, Skylitzes included the curious story about Knyaz Boris' sister, who was a prisoner for a long time in Constantinople, where she became an ardent preacher of the Christian doctrines.²³ Here he also added the story of the painter Methodius who supposedly turned Boris to piety with the aid of his art. 'Having built a new home, he (i.e. Boris) ordered a monk of Byzantine origin, named Methodius, and an artist to decorate the entire building with pictures. Directed by some divine inspiration, however, he did not indicate explicitly what kind of animals he wanted to have painted but ordered the monk to paint the ones he liked. His only stipulation was that they should be terrible and that they should inspire fear and trembling in onlookers. As he knew of nothing more terrifying than the Last Judgement, the monk painted that. On seeing the crowned valour of the righteous, on one side, and the multitude of punished sinners, on the other, and on being told the meaning of the picture, the Knyaz there and then renounced his heathen faith.'²⁴ This interesting legend, which is as impressive as the picture of which it speaks, is not Skylitzes' discovery. It appears in almost the same form in *Theophanus Continuatus*,²⁵ in *Pseudo-Simeon's Chronicle*, and in several other historical sources. Indeed, both *Theophanus Continuatus* and Skylitzes himself note that Boris 'received holy baptism late at night', immediately after seeing the completed painting. Whence the conclusion could be drawn that the baptism, which had to take place as unexpectedly and hastily as that, was done by the painter himself, and what is more — that he was a monk.

If these sources are compared in a chronological order, it will be easily found that they can all be dated to a certain short period of time. Obviously the legend told in them was evolved and put in literary circulation immediately after 865. It can be assumed that in its initial variants it contained other interesting details, too, which 'filtered through' in the course of time. Probably these variants first spread through the Byzantine chronicles which graded the facts under the influence of understandable national prejudices. It is no mere

chance that in the subsequent period they spread from the chronicles to popular Byzantine literature, to crop up persistently in manuscripts of a later date. Researchers like V. N. Veneshevich, S. Lambros, I. Douichev, and others point out to their existence in a manuscript of the monastery of St. Catherine in Sinai (cod. 508) dated to the 16th -17th century, in a manuscript of the Dionysus Monastery on Mount Athos (341 F. 394-396) dated to the 17th century, etc.²⁶ All these sources invariably emphasize the Byzantine origin of the artists mentioned. However, among the initial details of the story which have been preserved, there are those of special interest: e.g. the fact that the artist Methodius is also referred to as a 'philosopher' and 'bishop' or 'clergyman' and that it was he who performed the baptism. The well known assumption that the artist mentioned by Skylitzes was in fact the Slav enlightener Methodius, the brother of Cyril the Philosopher, is based on these facts.

During the first decades of the 19th century the growing interest in the work of the two Salonica brothers made this legend a subject of discussion. Not only were many new critical judgements published regarding the nationality of the above-mentioned painter, but many new additions to the old legend were made. In certain publications it was even contended that he was not a Byzantine but a Roman artist, that the murals were not in the palace of Knyaz Boris, but in his villa near Preslav. In Josef Dobrovski's interesting book *Cyril and Methodius, the Apostles to the Slavs*, translated into Russian in 1825, the views of a number of researchers are analyzed, such as Assemani, Schlitzer, etc., and the conclusion reached is that the mysterious artist Methodius, mentioned by Skylitzes, Simeon Logothet, etc., and the Slav Apostle Methodius are one and the same person. The author begins a special part of his book with the question: 'Has our Methodius been painting in Bulgaria for Tsar Boris?' and he answers enthusiastically: 'Yes, he has! The historical Methodius is not different from the painter Methodius, but is the same person.'²⁷ Twenty-five years later the dispute continued to hold the interest of those studying Bulgaria's past. In his popular book *Critical Research on the History of the Bulgarians*, published in Moscow in 1849, Yurii Venelin put forward the theory that this painter had come to the Bulgarian capital together with Knyaz

Boris' sister, who was returning from Constantinople, and that he was not Greek but Bulgarian. In Constantinople, where the great complexity and importance of the transformations taking place in such a vast state as Bulgaria were well understood, they had figured everything out: they were going to have a Bulgarian on the spot, in the guise of a painter.²⁸ In later publications this categorical view disappears and is replaced by sceptical reservations and even by conclusions in the opposite sense. C. Jireček finds the argumentation supporting the legend insufficient, while in ecclesiastical literature it is unequivocally stated that 'Cyril and Methodius took no personal part whatever in the Christianization of the Bulgarians' and that the legend of 'Boris turning to Christianity upon seeing the representation of the Last Judgement... painted according to legend by a certain Methodius' cannot be confirmed historically.²⁹

In spite of these new conceptions, the idea that the Slav enlightener Methodius had painted Knyaz Boris' palace, became very popular in Bulgaria. In the 1870s it was already introduced into textbooks (*New Textbook* by Shishkov, Constantinople, 1873). It increased further the two brothers' charism in the struggle for National Revival throughout the 19th century, and it became deeply rooted in the historical notions of the masses of the people. In 1864 the church painter Anastas Kurklisiiski inserted four medallions into his large Cyril and Methodius icon, in which he illustrated the theses of Venelin and Dobrovski: in one of these medallions the two brothers are shown christening Knyaz Boris, who stands half-naked in front of them, with the Last Judgement painting in the background. The same scenes were done by the Tryavna church painter Tsonyu Simeonov, the engraver N. Brajkov, and others,³⁰ who although unacquainted with the illuminations in the *Skyllitzes Chronicle*, depicted almost the same thing.

The hypothesis that the mysterious 'painter-monk' from Knyaz Boris's Palace and the enlightener of the Slavs are in fact the same person, cannot be directly proved by the hitherto known 'lives' of the two brothers. Different variants of these lives, however, contain some facts, which, although few, can serve as an intriguing argument in contentions on this matter. For instance, in his *Eulogy* Kliment Ohridski pointed out that the initial activity of Cyril as a

philosopher coincided with the end of the reign of Emperor Theophiles (829-842) under whom 'the holy icons were persecuted and annihilated', and that at that time he successfully fought the heretics 'crushing all their spite. As soon as he heard any abuse of the Holy image he flew like wing-footed to all sides and in clear words dispelled all temptations and taught the righteous faith.'³¹ It becomes clear that the strife in defence of the acts adopted in Nicea in 786 continued raging even after the removal of Patriarch John Grammaticos in 842. Why was the young Cyril entrusted with such a difficult task? The icon referred to in his extensive *Life* could naturally have been painted by some Roman artist, considering moreover that at that time the local school had already accumulated enough skill to lend the interpretation of the general Byzantine concepts some original nuances of its own. Some experts studying the murals in the San Clemente Basilica are inclined to think, however, that this icon has been executed by no one else but Methodius himself. (M. Wilpert and others). What gives them reason to believe that? When verified facts are compared, the answers to these different questions have a number of common points. Kliment Ohridski explained that during the time of Emperor Michael 'the Christians called a Council' and that precisely at that council Cyril opposed the heretics. The extensive *Life* specifies matters further adding that he was actually sent to conduct the dispute with Patriarch John Grammaticos after his removal and that this was done according to the explicit will of the Emperor.³² If these facts are precise it should be assumed that the choice had fallen on Cyril because, among other things, he was very well versed in the problems of Christian aesthetics and moreover with the practices of the mural painters of that time. The extensive *Life* also points out that he had studied 'all the Greek arts'. Bearing in mind that at that period the mural painters were as a rule monks, this assumption is fully plausible. While making up the later legends these details may well have reflected also on the concepts of the activity of Methodius. Similar association has probably arisen in the conversations about the author of the murals in the San Clemente Basilica and more particularly about the compositions around the grave of Cyril the Philosopher, which direct the attention to the artistic traditions in

the Balkans. The 'Private Judgement' mural also directs the attention to the same traditions – Christ in this mural gives blessing in a Byzantine manner with his first, middle finger and thumb fixed in one sign. Such 'bias' could only be shown by an artist who had set ideas about the iconographic types and scenes, and who could be quite logically associated with the idea of Methodius and his disciples. They stayed in Rome long enough to be able to fulfil such a task. Therefore the concept of a 'Roman artist' (introduced in one of the variants of the legend) can be linked, although in an abstract and symbolic way, not only with the delegations of the Papal See which travelled to Bulgaria between 866 and 870, headed by the bishops Paul of Popolonia, Formosus of Porto, Donatus of Ostia, Dominic and others, but also with the activity of the disciples of Cyril and Methodius, who, before arriving in Knyaz Boris' Palace had enriched their lives with an interesting stretch of service in Rome.

A categorical answer to all these questions cannot be found, however, without additional evidence. The authors who consider that the above-mentioned murals in the old Basilica of San Clemente had been done by 'Methodius himself – the man who brought confusion among the Bulgarians by his depiction of the Last Judgement, compared with an old Slav icon of St Peter and Paul in the Vatican', usually adduce no other factual material. That is why the scepticism of their opponents is no less justified. Pietro Toesca considers that 'Wilpert's notes have no solid foundation' and although logically referred to the 9th century these frescoes can also be compared to the decoration of Santa Maria in Cosmedin and by their 'more schooled technique can be linked to a later epoch'.³³ The facts adduced, however, can lead to the conclusion that the first religious painter who appeared in the Bulgarian capital in connection with the events of 865 was in close touch with the problems of its development, and, in all probability, was schooled as an artist in the bosom of Byzantine art (although referred to also as a 'Roman artist'). He had ample opportunities of intercourse with Knyaz Boris as his trusted man who understood him. His depictions were easy to grasp and remember. Therefore no matter whether he coincides with the historical personality of Methodius (who is supposed to have met Boris) or not, in the memories of the generations he 'merges' with

him, because his work is also a historical exploit. He has been incorporated in legends as the subject of admiration and gratitude which are not easy to forget.

The oldest representations of these themes in Bulgaria have not been preserved and we can form an opinion on their iconographic characteristics only from the paintings of subsequent centuries. The small portraiture on the Athos icon 'Saint Nicholas of Myra' (preserved in the Dohiar Monastery), which bear the clear inscriptions 'Cyril' and 'Methodius', the image in the mural in the Staro-Nagorichane Church (14th century), which was pointed out as early as 70 years ago by N. P. Kondakov, and the miniature of the 12th century copy of the Skylitzes Chronicle etc. constitute reliable bases for discussions on this subject. In view of the limited possibilities for recreating their images outside the framework of ecclesiastical art (because historical miniature is the only other reliable basis), the iconographic development of the scenes relating to their activity was probably uneven and not without interruptions. But interest in this theme did not cease either during the second Bulgarian Kingdom (1186-1396), or during the five centuries of Ottoman bondage. One must also bear in mind that Constantine-Cyril the Philosopher may sometimes have been depicted instead of Saint Cyril of Alexandria, one of the many other Fathers of the Church. This is in fact what happened in the Berende murals (which date from the beginning of the 13th century). In the Dolna Beshovitsa Church there are also paintings of two saints who are identical with Cyril and Methodius.³⁴

The Bulgarian National Revival period, which began in the first half of the 18th century and ended in 1878 with the country's liberation from Ottoman bondage, directed attention anew to the figures of Cyril and Methodius. The rapid increase in the number of portrayals made of them came at a time when the two brothers were the most popular figures in the Bulgarian historical gallery. The first such portraiture probably came as a result of suggestions from literary and ecclesiastical leaders. Some art historians assume that Zahari Zograph, the famous painter of the Revival period, started to work on portraits of the two brothers following the suggestions made by Neophit Rilski, who published their biographies in 1852 in

a Slav *Christomathy*, printed in Constantinople. It is difficult to say with certainty where the first signs of this new interest appeared, because the lack of information on Bulgarian monuments in the monasteries of Mount Athos and the destruction of many icons from that period are serious obstacles. It may be assumed, however, that around the beginning of the 19th century this theme was already established in the repertoire of local church painters: the Zograph Monastery murals of 1817 support this thesis. It is clear, however, that the first representations of this kind are rather uncertain regarding typification, composition and positioning of the figures. What Zahari Zograph painted in 1844 on the southern wall of the Rila Monastery church is quite different in style, content and detail from what became characteristic of Bulgarian iconography in the sixties, when faces, vestments and landscapes were required to be more concrete. After 1857, when the official annual Cyril and Methodius celebration was introduced, which left vivid memories and feelings in the minds of subsequent generations, the portraits of the two Salonica brothers enjoyed pride of place in the iconographic repertoire of the country's artists. Portrayals of them were not simply a mandatory theme, they were more than a traditional addition to the established thematic cycles, more than abstract symbols of Christian virtues. Through the two brothers the reemerging Bulgarian nation rediscovered its own past and looked forward to the future. They were the originators of that thirst for knowledge which was soon to free the country from its chains of ignorance, prejudice and slavish submissiveness. They encouraged the Bulgarians to dream of unity, which would one day increase many times over the strength of the people in their struggle against the enslaver. Their figures joined in the struggle for an independent national Church that would finally do away with the humiliating tutelage of the Phanariots. To work on their portraits was more than an obligation for the iconographers. Raised up on a high pedestal by the love and gratitude of the entire nation, as the inspirers of a nation-wide programme for a general national upsurge, the figures of the two brothers offered donors and artists, ecclesiastics and literary men an excellent opportunity to show their pride in the fruits of education and to unite the people of the whole country in the struggle to

achieve the sacred goal. In 1844 the Bulgarian merchant Angel Nikolaevich Hadjioglou commissioned a *Bulgarian Primer*, illustrated with a graphic print of the portraits of Cyril and Methodius, and it was published in Moscow.

In 1876 Antim Hilendaretsa, the prior of Hilendar Monastery, placed an order for a large copper-plate engraving with the images of the two brothers, which bears the inscription:

ПЪРВИТЕ ПРОСВЕТИТЕЛИ И ИЗДАТЕЛИ НА СЛАВЯНСКИТЕ БЪКВИ ПРАЗНОВАТЬ СЯ ВЪ
ЕДИНАДЕСЯТОГО МАЀА. ПРОДАВАТЬ СЯ ВЪ ПОЛЗА НА ОБЩЕЖИТЕЛНИЯ ХИЛЕНДАРСКИ МО-
НАСТЫРЬ 1870 Г.

'The first Enlighteners and the Creators of the Slav letters, whose festival is celebrated on May 11' СВАТІИ СЛАВЯНОБОГАРСТІИ АЧИТЕЛИ.

In 1870 a similar engraving was made in Belgrade, with the inscription 'The Sacred Slav-Bulgarian Teachers'.

These and many other similar engravings, created in various religious and literary centres, spread the fame of the two brothers to all corners of the Bulgarian lands. Their images became essential items in churches, schools and ordinary homes. In 1858 an unknown iconographer painted an icon of them in the Church of the Holy Virgin in Koprivshtitsa. Church painter Nedko Todorovich created similar icons in 1863 for the Church of St. Nicholas in the village of Zheravna. In 1864 Anastas Kurklisiiski was also painting Cyril and Methodius: one of his original icons, from the village of Vurbitsa, Preslav district, is now kept in the Varna Museum. The Tryavna church painters Tsonuy Simeonov (an icon by him, dated 1866, can be seen in the Church of the Holy Archangel in Tryavna), Zahari Tsanuyv (icons signed by him and dated 1869, are kept in the village of Orizare, Bourgas district) also worked a long time on the images of the Salonica brothers. They also figured to a large extent in the work of the representatives of the Samokov school of painting. Stanislav Dospevski's icons, dated 1860, in the village of Oustovo, the icons by Ivan D. Dospevski, dated 1880, in the village of Novo Selo, Vidin district, and the Rila Monastery murals of 1844, as well as the Troyan Monastery murals done in 1848 by Zahari Zograph give a clear idea both of the duration of this interest

and of the geographical area in which the Samokov school worked. The homonymous icons by Dicho Zograph, Sokrat Georgiev, Dimitar P. Minev, Stefan Andonov, Nikola Vassilev, as well as icons and murals in the Zograph Monastery (a Bulgarian monastery on Mount Athos), which date from 1864 and 1869, reveal other aspects of the great amount of work done in this field. And there are many, many more examples.

The earliest of these portraits are conventional. In 1841 Dimitar G. Molerov painted Methodius as Archbishop of Moravia (in the St. Nicholas Chapel of the main church in the Rila Monastery in a stereotyped pose and with somewhat unrecognizable traits (reminiscent of the face of Ivan Rilski), without placing him in any definite context. Zahari Zograph did the same when working in the Rila Monastery. He placed the figure of Methodius, Archbishop of Moravia, among the saints of the lowest order, together with St. Stephen and St. Sava. At this stage the two brothers were still separated; but soon they stepped forward out of the general ranks to form an independent composition: in 1848 the same Zahari Zograph depicted them (in the Troyan Monastery) side by side. The scroll with the Slav alphabet standing out clearly in their hands and the image of Christ, alone in an aureole of light or surrounded by a group of cherubs as he gives them His blessing, complete the pictorial unity of the scheme, which was to remain a standard for a long time. Behind them there are indications of some kind of setting, and between them explanatory inscriptions are inserted. After this a long line of iconographers, including Nedko Todorovich, Anastas Kurklisiiski, Hristo Enchev, depicted them in the same way.

In the 'sixties and 'seventies, however, another variant on the theme also became quite popular: both brothers are depicted standing, more often than not dressed in bishop's vestments, with crowns on their heads, in a frontal pose, viewed from below. One of them holds a crosier and an open book, the other, a cross and a scroll with large letters on it. In cases where this variant is used, the somewhat indeterminate background becomes a historical landscape, while in the corners of the pictorial composition there are medallions illustrating important aspects of the activity of the two saints. In yet a third basic compositional variant, Cyril and

Methodius are depicted as church dignitaries and enlighteners, standing around the Lord's Table with the symbols of the Holy Eucharist in their hands. This variant was a favourite with many representatives of the Samokov school. In Stanislav Dospevski's icon, dated 1865 (now in the village of Oustovo) they are depicted standing, facing one another, dressed in ornate bishop's ceremonial robes. Cyril is holding the Communion Bread, and Methodius, the Chalice, while a scroll with the Slav alphabet and a book translated by them lie on the communion table. This variant is repeated, with minor changes only, in the homonymous icons and murals of Ivan Dospevski, Konstantin Angelov and others.

In all variants, however, the painters and engravers of the National Revival period proceeded essentially from the same image. They had rather limited pictorial material at their disposal, which is why they borrowed from the depository of the traditional suite of saints, sometimes adding only a few secondary details. The images of Cyril and Methodius in the *Bulgarian Primer* published in Moscow in 1844 still lack individuality. They are depicted as decrepit old men in monk's habits (cowl, monk's mantle and a long analav*) rather like the effigies of the Reverend Fathers Nikodim Kohoeozerskiy and Pahomiy Kenskiy in the Russian „Иконописный подлинник“ (Iconographic Originals). To most of the country's artists the figures of the two Salonica brothers, which had become so close and tangible to the whole of the Bulgarian people, were apparently still an ideal of which they had a rather hazy picture. In the murals in Rila Monastery and in Troyan Monastery Zahari Zograph characterized them rather sketchily, although he was not incapable of achieving greater typification and clarity. A striving for some kind of universality in all portrayals of them still prevailed as in compositions like 'The Last Judgement', 'Poor Lazarus', or 'Asking the Witch for a Remedy'. The new wave of ideas and feelings, which changed the appearance and composition of the group of 'sinners' and revolutionized the portraits of donors were not applied in the treatment of the new theme. Insufficient experience and the dependence upon canons restricted artistic thought and the exhibi-

* Reserved for monks of stricter orders, the rest use the paramend

tion of more daring and ingenuity in this respect. It may well be that precisely for this reason the engravings done abroad, by artists with different training and ideas, were received with so much trust by the country's iconographers. In spite of all the conventions regarding vestments and historical details, Christophor Zhefarovich's collection of engravings, the *Stematography*, were very widely used until the Liberation in 1878. In the majority of icons from the National Revival period Cyril and Methodius are depicted in the same ornate bishop's garb and with the same crowns as we see in Zhefarovich's work one century earlier (the portrait of Methodius as Archbishop of Moravia). In 1864 a polychromatic lithograph with portraits of them was printed in Vienna. This easily surpasses anything created by that time in Bulgaria in this field. Its composition is clear and well-motivated, the solidity is convincing, the drawing is precise and expressive, delicate use is made of tonality and *chiaroscuro*, and the details are rich and varied. This lithograph was an example of how the much desired visual concrete substance and verisimilitude could be achieved, and it was no accident therefore that many iconographers were ready to repeat it, with only slight deviations from the basic idea.

The church painter Tsonyu Simeonov solved the problem in the same way. His figures of the two brothers stand out against a dark background, large and authoritative like sculptured monuments, dressed in richly adorned bishop's vestments. Methodius holds a crosier and an open book, and Cyril, the traditional scroll with the alphabet and a cross. Below, between them, flows a river, apparently intended to remind the viewer of the River Ticha: its banks are lined with fortresses and impressive religious and secular buildings. The two lower corners contain two multi-figure compositions, 'Preaching the Gospel to the Bulgarian People', and 'The Christening at the Preslav Court'. There is a great deal of naivety in these complementary images, which in size and positioning are similar to the biographical scenes in medieval icons. The 'moonlit' landscape and the silhouettes of the architectural forms on the banks of the river are too indeterminate in composition and style to represent any particular epoch or place. The buildings on the right feature certain oriental elements, while those on the left

bear some resemblance to barracks or uniform industrial edifices. Similar conventions are also found in the small compositions (although they are simply borrowings from the Vienna lithograph by Kammler and Obenheimer). They look like coloured drawings. There are no complex pictorial problems in them, although several colour spots are used, such as gold, soft green, black, white, etc. Notwithstanding these conventions, however, the small figure compositions and the landscape in the background proved to be of great importance for the further development of the icon during the Bulgarian National Revival. They introduced principles and feelings, which were entirely alien to the medieval pictorial system. If the medaillions were taken out of the general picture and were considered independently, they could be considered a secular art, which was the fruit of an evolution up till then unknown in Bulgarian lands. They are also entirely new as regards aim, if not with respect of colouring, at least as regards the silhouette, the drawing and the situation.

That is also how the theme was approached by the painter Nikola Vassilev from Shoumen. In a series of homonymous icons he depicted the two Salonica brothers as church dignitaries full of inner strength, standing out solemnly against the background of a romantic historical landscape (the places on the banks of the Ticha river are here architecturally more consistent, but the general appearance still remains eclectic). Lovely draperies and abundant light and gold effects reinforce the representativeness of the basic variant. In one of these icons (dated 1869, 113 cm × 73 cm, now in the Varna Museum of Revival Art) the artist displays not only great skill in the treatment of details, but also a sense of the monumental. The same approach was adopted by Anastas Kurklisiiski. In a large icon (124 cm × 70 cm), dated 1864 (in the Varna Museum of Revival Art) he included four compositions with historical and romantic subjects, and with interesting and naive details. The artist's means of expression are weaker: his colouring is pale, almost aquarelle-like, his line lacks firmness. The composition 'The Christening of Knyaz Boris' is based on the popular legend in which Boris abandons his former faith and becomes a Christian at the sight of 'The Last Judgement' which one of the two Salonica brothers had just painted for him in

his palace in Preslav. 'The Last Judgement' is seen between the two groups as a small easel painting. This naivety is largely counter-balanced, however, by the sincerity with which Kurklisiiski works, by the freshness of his approach, and the immediacy of his narrative. And to express his feelings and thoughts more effectively, he supplemented the pictorial narrative with patriotic texts about the reigns of Kyaz Boris and Tsar Simeon and about the historic deeds of the Salonica brothers. Thus the icon, which for centuries had been called upon to evoke purely pious feelings, became a historical and patriotic memorial. From an object of worship it turned into a political poster.

An exception to these variants are the icons in which the two brothers are shown together with a series of other Bulgarian saints, usually patriarchs and archbishops. Several such icons have been preserved, and it can be said that this variant is common to the icon collections of the Zograph Monastery on Mount Athos, while inside Bulgaria proper it is found much less frequently. The most impressive one is certainly the icon in the Monastery's great hall. In this icon (dated 1864) the two brothers are depicted in the stereotyped pose. They are standing on two sides of a small lectern on which a book lies. To this well-known basic theme, however, a host of details are added, which direct our thoughts far away from the sphere of religion. Besides the two Enlighteners there are portraits of Patriarch Theophylactus of Turnovo and of Kliment, Archbishop of Ohrid, while behind them rows of heavy volumes of ancient books are visible. Although the upper part of the icon contains representatives of the celestial powers, and the traditional symbols of Slav wisdom are written on the pages of the open book held by an angel, miracles and abstract faith give way to a more down-to-earth programme. The unusual library display speaks of the need for more knowledge, and is an appeal for hard work and perseverance. And, to make sure that the moral is not missed, an inscription has been added to the picture, which sounds rather like a political harangue and a call to action to resurrect the past: 'These Enlighteners and Apostles, Bulgarians by birth, created the present Slav alphabet in the year 855 and translated the Holy Scriptures into Old-Bulgarian and Slavonic, that is why the entire Slav people

should honour their memory on May 11. Their sacred desire to enlighten their compatriots was faithfully fulfilled by the pious Tsar Simeon, whose greatness stems from his noble endeavours to educate the Bulgarian nation. Theophylactus was summoned from Ohrid by Tsar Assen and made Patriarch of Turnovo, which was a free independent city, as others have been. December 30, 1864.' A comparison between this icon and the 'miraculous' ones in the central church reveals one of the most important aspects of the evolution of the Bulgarian icon in Zograph Monastery: the 'historization' of its theme and the intensification of the patriotic feelings constitute the main factor in its progress.

In this way the Bulgarian icon, heir to the famous medieval models, wrapped in so many mystic legends, came down again to the burning earth. Although lagging behind from the revolutionary ideas, denigrated by the ironic repartees of national leaders like Botev and Karavelov, it was purged of the last illusions and again got involved with the topical issues of the '60s and '70s of the 19th century. The depictions of Cyril and Methodius were still tied with the remnants of the medieval plastic systems, but the icon also participated in the great resurrection of Bulgaria's glory on a par with the other branches of the exact knowledge, because it involved the masses directly and permanently, and no longer in utopias and submission, but in positive monumental solutions. It created new fields of gravitation, which smelt not of incense but of gunpowder, in which the words pronounced from the altar were in consonance with Botev's words: 'May 11 has become a holiday of the people. It reminds us of our past and present, and is a holiday which must inspire us with the idea of complete spiritual and political liberation.' Through these fields of gravitation the icon again came into touch with the forces striving towards the future. When in 1876 the tremours of the people's wrath intensified, it followed in the lead of the 'letters signed in blood' of the deputies from Oborishte. The icon painters from Tryavna, who depicted with so much love the images of the two brothers, organized their own detachment in the uprising and gave its banner to the young Simeon P. Simeonov, deeply confident that he would carry it to the realm of freedom.

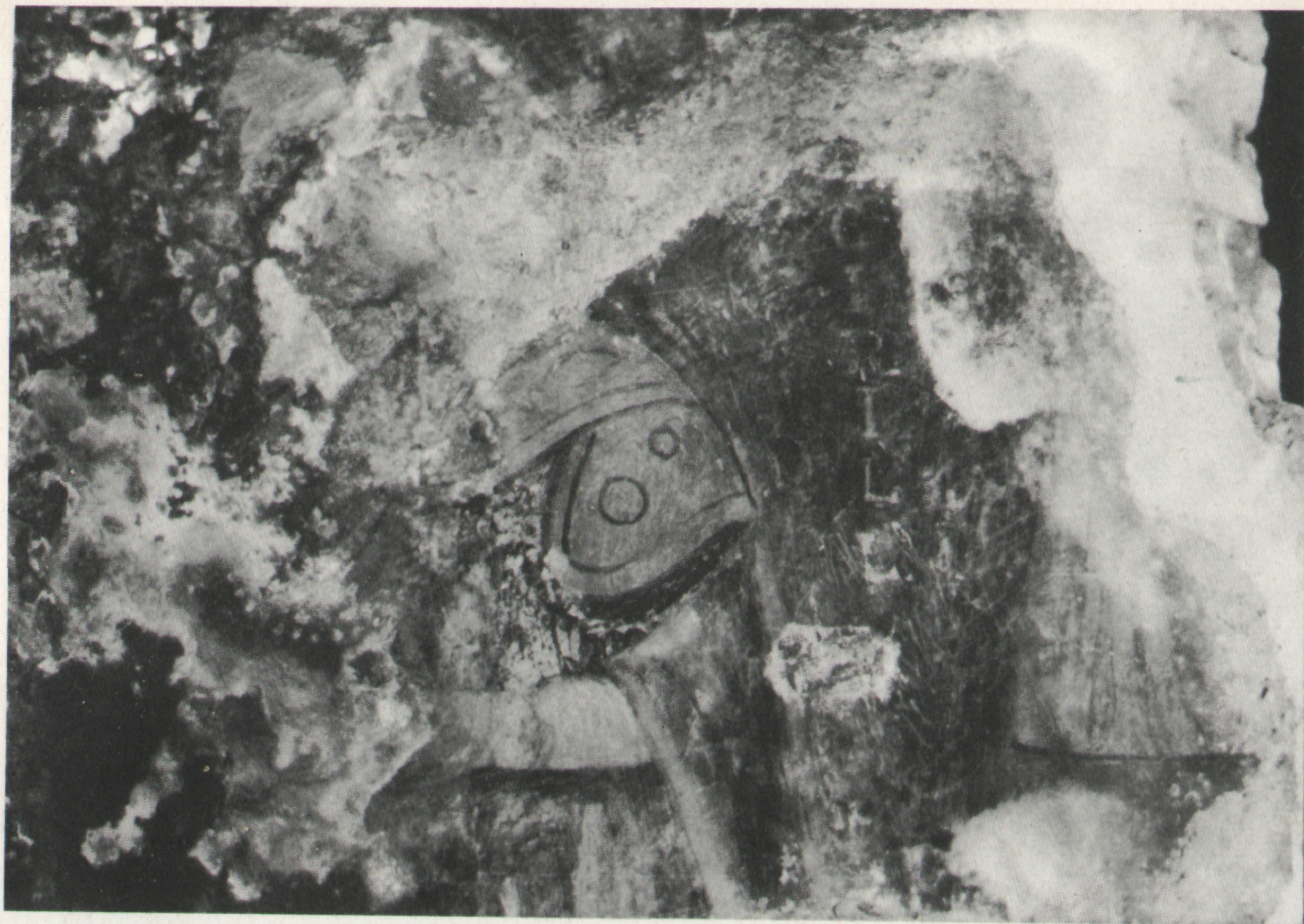
If a comparison is made between the portraits of Cyril and

Methodius in the *San Clemente* Basilica in Rome and the homonymous figures and compositions in Old Bulgarian art, interesting points of contact are found. In the former, one's attention is drawn mainly by the subjects, which are related to Rome, while in the Old Bulgarian compositions such subjects are absent and their themes are devoted to medieval Bulgaria. Although they wrote near the portrait of Methodius the explanatory words 'Bishop of Moravia', when elaborating their figure compositions the church painters of the Bulgarian National Revival drew attention only to his 'Preaching to the Bulgarian Nation'. They omitted from their repertoire themes related to the death of the two brothers (the only exception being the Arapovo Monastery murals, near Assenovgrad, painted by the iconographers Alexi Atanassov and Georgi Danchov in 1864). Although they do not concur in this respect, the two groups of pictorial representations are akin in others. In the composition 'The Transportation of the Relic of Pope St. Clement', dating from the time of the old Basilica, Cyril and Methodius are in vestments corresponding to the monk's modest way of life. Their vestments in certain miniatures, among them those of the menology of Basil II Bulgaroctonus (early 11th century) are similar. It is not impossible for similar models to have been in circulation as well among the Bulgarian iconographers of the respective period. About the beginning of the 19th century, when their interest in portraits of Cyril and Methodius revived, Bulgarian iconographers were still dependent on medieval pictorial principles, and the ascetic trends, the deliberate coarseness and the bidimensional rhythm still continued to influence them greatly. And yet, as soon as they began working on these themes, they became lavish, they endeavoured to include in their pictorial narrative the most expensive vestments, crowns, binding, etc., they had ever seen. From a psychological viewpoint, however, this fact may be interpreted as a peculiar form of idealization and compensation for those artistic effects that the painter was still unable to achieve through realistic generalization. But from a historical viewpoint, this fact has different projections and it cannot be separated from the influence of foreign models. It seems that what the Italian painter Rassini painted in the 18th century was of great importance to Bulgarian iconographers, and it is

no coincidence that they depicted the two Salonica brothers with the same ecclesiastical rank and sumptuous garb as that painter had. Although direct influence in this instance is not unlikely, it is beyond doubt that they learnt certain things from transportable models (engravings, etc.).

The first striking example in this respect are the engravings in H. Zhefarovich's *Stematography*, printed in 1741.³⁵

In the long biography of Cyril it is said that he wishes to be buried in his homeland. That is why Pope Adrian's offer of his own crypt in the Vatican Basilica was discarded in favour of a compromise solution: that Cyril be buried in the San Clemente Basilica. In 1886 the Italian painter Nobili represented this episode in one of his compositions. The mural does not, however, depict the actual obsequies, but it does feature the funeral procession against a background of the silhouettes of the Colosseum and the Basilica itself. The most striking thing in the whole composition is the movement and the general atmosphere. As one looks at Nobili's composition one has the feeling that the solemn procession will never halt, that it will continue for ever, to the unknown, as if entirely escaping the control of time. In this 'incarnation' it is conceived as a kind of endless history. Maybe like the history of the basilica itself, which has preserved through the centuries an unforgettable name, long buried in its 'crypt' and at the same time for ever living in its glorious behests and in the aura of its artistic wealth: the name of the Bulgarian saint Cyril the Philosopher.



Portrait of Cyril the Philosopher. Fragment from the murals in the San Clemente Basilica (9th century).



Portrait of Cyril. Mosaic above his grave in the San Clemente Basilica (1929).



Arrival of the Relic of Pope St. Clement in Rome. Mural in the narthex of the old San Clemente Basilica (9th century).



The Private Judgement. Mural in the narthex of the old San Clemente Basilica. (9th century).



The Private Judgement. Mural in the nartex of the old San Clemente Basilica. A replica. (9th century).



Christ's Crucifixion, the Tree of Life, and other motifs. Mosaic in the apse of the new San Clemente Basilica (12th century).



A detail



The Tree of Life, the sacred rivers, birds and animals. Fragment of the mosaic in the apse of the new Basilica (12th century).



Bird of paradise. Fragment of the mosaic in the apse of the new San Clemente Basilica (12th century).



Pietro Rassin, Portrait of Cyril (18th century).



Pietro Rassin, Portrait of Methodius. Mural in the San Clemente Basilica (18th century).



Giovanni Odazzi, Arrival of Pope Clement of Rome in Rome. Mural in the new San Clemente Basilica (18th century).



Nobili, Cyril and Methodius before Pope Adrian II. Mural in the Cyril and Methodius Chapel (dated 1886).



Nobili, Cyril's Burial. A Mural in the Cyril and Methodius Chapel (1886).



Nobili, Cyril and Methodius before Christ, presented by Pope Leo XIII. A Mural in the Cyril and Methodius Chapel (1886).



Cyril the Philosopher. A mural in the Berende Church (13th century).



The Conversion of the Bulgarians to Christianity. Miniature from the Manasses Chronicle. Vatican (1344-45).



Methodius, Enlightener of the Slavs. A mural in the Church of Saint George in Zograph Monastery. 1816-1817.



Tsonyu Simeonov, Icon with portraits of Cyril and Methodius. Church of the Holy Archangel in Tryavna (1886).



Tsonyu Simeonov, Preaching to the Bulgarian Nation. A detail from the icon.



Tsonyu Simeonov, The Baptising of Knyaz Boris. A detail from the icon.



Nikola Vassilev, Icon with portraits of Cyril and Methodius. Varna Museum of Revival Art (1869).



A. Kurklisiiski, Icon with portraits of Cyril and Methodius and historical compositions. Varna Museum of Revival Art (1864).



A. Kurklisiiski, Knyaz Boris' Confession. A detail from an icon.



Icon with portraits of Cyril and Methodius; Theophylactus, Patriarch of Turnovq; and Kliment Ohridski, Zograph Monastery in Mount Athos (1864).



A. Atanassov and Georgi Danchov, Scenes from the Lives of Cyril and Methodius. Murals in the Arapovo Monastery (1864).



A. Atanassov and Georgi Danchov, Scenes from the Lives of Cyril and Methodius. Murals in the Arapovo Monastery (1864).



Cyril and Methodius. An icon in the Rila Monastery (1872).



Cyril and Methodius. An icon from the Church of Saint George in Toulcha (1886).



The Tryavna School of Painting (probably Zahari Zograph and his son Stefan). Icon with portraits of Cyril and Methodius in the Church of the Holy Trinity in the village of Enikjoj, Romania (1886).



Sassoferrato, Madonna. Cyril and Methodius Chapel in San Clemente Basilica (17th century).



Stoyan Koyumdjiev and Yordan Spirov. Cyril and Methodius translating the holy books into Old Bulgarian. Mosaic in the San Clemente Basilica in Rome, 1975.

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119 (Bulg.)
2. *Kliment Ohridski*, op. cit., pp. 426-27.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid. p. 471, cf. also The Long Biography, pp. 113-114.
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6. Cf. for the history of the Basilica and its historical and artistic
treasures: *P. Toesca*, II Medioevo, Torino, vol. I, pp. 410-13; *G.
Wilpert*, Le pitture della basilica primitiva di S. Clemente, in:
Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire, 1906, p. 251. Leonardo
Boyle, Piccola guida di San Clemente, Roma 1967
7. In the 15th century the Basilica was in the hands of the
Congregation of the Ambrosians; since the second half of the
17th century it has been, and continues to be, at the disposal of
the Irish Dominicans.
8. Cf. the special publication 'Mosaico di S. Clemente', 1976,
Collegio S. Clemente, Roma, L'arte Bizantina e romanica a cura
di Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti, Roma 1968, pp. 524-534
9. These changes in the interior are described in detail in Professor
Leonardo Boyle's op. cit.

10. The disappearance of the relic and its return to the Basilica was investigated by *Professor Dr. Leonard Boyle*, who describes episode in detail in his article 'How I Discovered the Relic of Saint Cyril, the Apostle to the Slavs'.
11. As regards the activities of Cyril and Methodius as translators, a huge number of scientific publications have appeared in the past few decades by specialists from different countries (L. P. Zhukovskaya, J. Vais, J. Kurz, J. Vlašek, F. Grivec, R. Nahtigal, B. Knac, F. Mares and others). Cf. a detailed bibliography on this question: S. Nikolova, 'Present State of the Studies of Cyril and Methodius Abroad', magazine of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia, 1973, No. 3, pp. 20-43.
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13. Stefano Sakač, *Santi Cirillo e Metodio a Roma, Cirillo e Metodio i Santi Apostili degli slavi*, Pontificio istituto orientale, Roma, 1964, pp. 71-101.
14. Prof. Leonardo Boyle, *Piccola guida di San Clemente*, Roma, 1967, pp. 49-50.
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20. Cf. Vassil Zlatarski, History of the Bulgarian State in the Middle Ages, Vol. 1, Part 2, Sofia, 1971, pp-68-279 (Bulg.)

21. Atanas Boschkov, *Die Bulgarische Volkskunst*, Verlag Aurel Bongers, Rechlinghausen, 1972, pp. 51-69

22. Sources for the History of Bulgaria, XI, Sofia, 1965, p. 237 (Bulg.)

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid. p. 237-238.

25. Sources for the History of Bulgaria, IX, S., 1964, p. 115-17 and p. 174-5. Theophanus Continuatus mentions the painter Methodius as a Byzantine: '... he (Boris) convoked some painter monk from our Romaics'. Pseudo-Simeon does not mention this detail. According to him, 'when Boris returned to his country he asked the church painter Methodius to paint the picture of the Last Judgement and the Retribution in his home.', Ibid, p. 1975. (Bulg.)

26. Cf. Ivan Duicev, *Medioevo Bizantino-Slavo*, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, Roma, 1968

27. *Josef Dobrovski*, Cyril and Methodius the Slav Enlighteners. A Historical and Critical Investigation, Moscow, 1825, p. 60-63. (Rus.).

28. *J. I. Venelin*, Critical Investigations on the History of the Bulgarians, M. 1849, pp. 34-56 (Rus.) A similar view is supported by *Dobri Vojnikov* too. In his Short History of Bulgaria,

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29. *R. Karolev*, Lessons in Bulgarian Church History, taught in the main Gabrovo school for boys by the teacher R. Karolev. Constantinople, 1878, p. 7 (Bulg.)
30. *Atanas Bozhkov*. The Tryavna School, Sofia, BAN publication, 1967, p. 124 (Bulg.)
31. *Kliment Ohridski*. Eulogy of Cyril, Christomathy of Old Bulgarian Literature, Sofia, 1967, p. 33 (Bulg.)
32. Ibid, p. 119
33. Pietro Toesca, op. cit.
34. The questions relating to these icons are examined in detail in the works of *Assen Vassiliev*, Portraits of Cyril and Methodius in Bulgaria, Sofia, 1970, *V. Pandurski and S. Bosilkov*, Cyril and Methodius in Rome, Sofia, 1970, *A. Bozhkov*, Bulgarian Historical Painting, Part I, Sofia, 1972, etc. (Bulg.). Cf. also the first publication of this book – *Atanas Bojkov*, La Basilica' San Clemente a Roma e le immagini di Cirillo e Metodio nell' arte Bulgaria antica, Sofia Press, 1976.
35. In connection with the bicentennial of the publication of the Stematography, Matica Srbska in Novi Sad released a new phototype edition.

